

SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2761

CREATING A WORK GROUP TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP AND DISPARITY ISSUES

PRESENTER:

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Brief Summary:

In 2001, Congress passed the “No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)”. Under this legislation, students in school districts receiving certain federal funds must reach state standards in reading and math. Schools and districts are required to track students’ progress toward proficiency goals. In Washington, progress is tracked in the fourth, seventh and tenth grades through the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (“WASL”). WASL testing is to be broadened in coming years to include other grade assessments and additional subject areas.

Schools and districts must track adequate yearly progress (“AYP”) of students toward meeting state standards. Progress is measured for students as a whole and measured by subgroup categories (African American, white, Asian, Native American, Hispanic, low-income, special education and limited English proficient).

In 2002-03, Washington students, as a whole, made AYP toward meeting state standards in reading and math. At the fourth grade level, Native American, African American, low-income students made AYP in math but not in reading. At the seventh and tenth grade levels, Native American, African American, Hispanic, special education, limited English proficient and low-income students did not make AYP in either reading or math. The achievement gap between the scores of these students not making AYP and those making AYP (Asian and white students) is growing.

Under this bill, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (“SPI”) will convene a work group to:

- 1) Review, evaluate and recommend refinements to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (“EALRs”) and grade level expectations for the four student learning goals;
- 2) Recommend whether a new learning goal should be adopted on understanding the value of different cultures and heritages;
- 3) Advise the SPI on assessments that are valid and reliable for people with diverse learning styles based on gender, disability, race and ethnicity;

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- 4) Recommend the minimum number of students that should be included in a subgroup for state reporting purposes;
- 5) Recommend a set of effective strategies and best practices that districts may use to eliminate the achievement gap and make the information available through SPI's website;
- 6) Recommend ways teacher preparation programs and professional development opportunities can help new and experienced teachers work with children with different learning styles based on the children's heritage, gender or disability; and
- 7) Recommend ways to recruit and retain teachers from racial and ethnic minority groups.

The work group will report on its progress by October 2006. The work group will include teachers and parents of children in the NCLB subgroups. The work group will consult with organizations and persons concerned with the educational achievement of children in the NCLB subgroups. Data for the students in the subgroups will be reported separately, as required by NCLB.

CAAA Position on this bill – CAAA supports this bill. The data on the widening achievement gap for African American students is appalling. This bill creates a work group to further study and make recommendations on addressing the achievement gap of underachieving student subgroups. African American students are one of the underachieving NCLB subgroups in Washington State. The work group created under SHB 2761 is charged with working directly with African American parents and organizations concerned with the education of African American students in assessing the problem and constructing recommendations for closing the achievement gap.